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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

THURSDAY, November 2, 1939.

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Subject: "BEAUTIFYING THE FARMSTEAD WITH NATIVE WILD PLANTS." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Publication available. Farmers' Bulletin 1087-F, Beautifying the Farmstead. Also Farmers' Bulletin 1591, Transplanting trees and shrubs.

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Fall is your season, if you are one of those women who are constantly trying to fix up the grounds around your home. Especially if you wish to spend little or no money on your plantings, and provide yourself with plants that need the least possible time and care. I'm talking to the women of the farm family in particular, because usually you have the appearance of the farmstead very much at heart and often you have more time and inclination to do something about improvements than the menfolk who put in long hours over their field crops.

Somewhere in your general neighborhood or within range of the family car you probably know of woods. Woods where by the consent of the owner you can get hardy wild shrubs, small trees, and other plant materials native to your locality simply for the trouble of digging them up. Plant scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture say that the more trying the conditions for plant growth in your climate the more important it is to get native species and stock of the commoner things that have grown from seeds, or plants gathered near home. Many are so common they are often overlooked. Still some of them are beautiful and have value for ornamental planting. Nearly all improve with culture.

The fall of the year is the best time for transplanting many of our shrubs

and trees. Fall planting gives the plants a chance to rest and recover from the ordeal of being moved before spring changes begin. In moving plants, protect the roots and keep them moist.

Those with experience recommend starting out with a plan, rather than hit-or-miss transfer of wild plants from nearby woodlands. Find out what plants you can get, and choose a few of them,- not too many kinds. In nature, the same kind of plants often grow in masses, with a few stragglers mixed in some other clump or group. That's a good way to begin planning.

For example, if you live in the east, you may want a mass of dogwood blooms in the spring along one side of your property. Here and there you might have one or two red-bud trees with their rich purple-red blossoms that reach their maturity near the same time as the dogwood. In another location, mass the red-buds and introduce perhaps one or two dogwood trees.

The kind of plants is less important than their location on the grounds and the general effect of the mass. You want plantings to screen the foundations of the house, but not too many of them. Leave part of the base of the house exposed, to tie the building in with the ground. And remember that even dwarf evergreens grow, and may look crowded or grow lop-sided after a few years if too close together. Sometimes when the foundation is low, a low-growing border of cover vines, such as English ivy close to the house, defined by corner plantings, is more effective than a thick mass of shrubs against the house.

One of the factors to look out for in getting mass effects away from the house is the "expression" of different types of trees and plants. Yes, trees have expression. Stop and think of the Lombardy popular and other tall slim plants. They seem to be exclaiming, "Look at me!" while drooping plants like the weeping willow give a sympathetic, almost mournful impression. These contrasting "expressions" do not belong together, nor do sturdy oaks and clinging vines, or heavy

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plants with large dark leaves and airy plants with light, green leaves.

Another point in making your plan: The characters of the plants that make them ornamental are their foliage, their winter effect, and their flowers. It may surprise you that for permanent plantings flowers are considered less important than foliage and winter effect. The blooming period of the average shrub is short- often not more than two weeks. So if you want blooms, select different plants to give a succession of blooms throughout the season.

On the other hand, foliage lasts from five months to a year, and we have to look at foliage long after the blooms have gone. That's why evergreens shrubs are so popular. But evergreens are best used in moderation, varied with some of the shrubs that have bright colored berries, or trees with bark of brown, gray, red, green or yellow or white like the birch and sycamore. Properly arranged these make pleasing accents and add to winter beauty.

In planning a clump of shrubs, put the tallest shrubs at the back, and the shorter ones in front. That suggests giving attention to the matter of balance in your complete design for planting. Without going into landscaping, and sticking to the informal plantings that look most natural around a farm home, you can achieve a balance of interest without matching each side. For example, a group of tall trees on one side of a lawn may be balanced by several clumps of shrubs on the other side.

Whatever ornamental plantings you plan, and wherever you get the materials- from the woods, from a neighbor, or a nursery,- consider other features with them. The farmstead looks much better with an attractive entrance and driveway, a dry walk of pleasing lines, a home vegetable garden as well as flower beds, and above all a good open lawn. If you'd like suggestions on fixing up these features of the home grounds, you might write to the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and ask for free copies of Farmers' Bulletin 1087-F, Beautifying the Farmstead and Farmers' Bulletin 1591-F, Transplanting trees and shrubs. Also contact your County Agent and State Agricultural Experiment Station.

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